

COMMITTEE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
MINUTES
October 15, 2001

The following members were in attendance: Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Graham, Ms. Helm, Ms. Prather, Mr. Thomas, Ms. Watts, Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Welch. Mr. Barger chaired the meeting. Members absent: Mr. Baker, Mr. Robinson, and Ms. Weinberg.

The August 20, 2001, minutes were approved as presented.

The presidents from Eastern Kentucky University, Murray State University, and the University of Kentucky were invited to discuss how these universities are implementing the recommendations made in the OCR reports, particularly whether the implementation strategies are helping to improve the process for recruiting and retaining African American faculty and the provision of support programs for African American students and faculty.

Lee Todd, University of Kentucky, made his presentation via ITV.

President Todd stated that he is committed to the Kentucky Plan and equal opportunities. The University of Kentucky has created a commission on diversity and a commission on the status of women to make recommendations for change to the president in these areas.

Other initiatives include programs that bring high school juniors and seniors to campus to inform them about careers, scholarships, cultural events, summer programs, scholarships for African Americans who have never attended or attended college years ago are given an opportunity to take a course for free, the Kentucky Excel Initiative Award is given to students (selected in the eighth grade) if they maintain a certain grade point average, an African American Student Parent Orientation, and a freshmen summer program where students can earn six hours of college credit. UK's Critical First Year activities focus on having every student earn a 3.0 GPA.

The university has changed the campus landscape with the addition of benches and hot dog stands where African American and Caucasian students sit together and faculty sit with staff and students. Outdoor concerts are also held. The first pep rally the university had in 12 years drew 7,000 students.

Areas that require more attention are undergraduate enrollment -- UK's objective is seven percent. 6.4 percent were enrolled in fall 2000, the six-year graduation rate for the degree seeking Kentucky resident students and African American students, and the employment of African Americans in executive administrative/managerial positions, as faculty, and in professional positions.

Laureatta Byars, associate provost for minority affairs, stated that every African American student has a mentor. Students come on campus for the six-week freshmen

summer program and take two college classes for credit. The summer program is designed to provide the students a very rigorous, structured academic environment.

Mr. Thomas asked the UK reps if any evaluating factors, in terms of search committees and their effectiveness in the recruitment process, were in place.

Terry Allen responded that the responsibility of the search within a college would be the responsibility of the dean of the college. The deans understand that their responsibility is to carry out the equal opportunity procedures of the institution itself.

Ms. Byars went on to state that faculty members could go to an academic ombudsman if problems arise. That person primarily deals with student-related issues. Instructors can also go to the teaching learning center that offers faculty support in dealing with issues that might arise in the classroom. The teaching learning center will work with the faculty on strategies to use in the classroom to give a broader perspective on whatever the content area is. Also in minority affairs, if we hear from faculty that there are a number of common concerns, a workshop around that issue for African American faculty will be planned.

UK is updating all materials dealing with different kinds of harassment. This includes information designating what offices can be contacted when difficulties arise. The information is for faculty, students, and staff.

President King Alexander commented that Murray State University has a long way to go. The geographic location is a disadvantage. Mr. King also emphasized the significance of creating and maintaining a great degree of diversity on the campus. Murray State University is committed to the objectives of the Kentucky Plan.

Ms. Helm suggested that President Alexander follow-up on the concerns with recruitment and retention of staff and faculty. One concern was that faculty members reported experiencing adversity in the classroom from non-minority students and that they also experienced some negative feedback whenever they attempted to use diversity materials in the classroom.

Annazette Fields, director of equal opportunity, and Don Robertson of Murray State University addressed the committee.

MuSU has an enrollment management committee that is chaired by a special assistant to the president. A specific item every two weeks on the agenda is African American recruitment, strategies, and the progress being made and looking at the goals and objectives. Staff is finalizing a new strategic plan for African American recruitment.

The plan outlines a number of special initiatives. Some programs emphasized include the African American heritage bowl, honors day program, and distinguished black high school students -- bringing those individuals to campus and having a recognition ceremonies and recruitment activities, involving community organizations and leaders.

Additional need-based as well as merit scholarships are being added. All printed materials are reviewed to make sure they reflect the diversity at the university.

There is follow up with African American students who applied and were accepted but chose to attend college elsewhere or not at all. During summer orientation, special sessions for African American students and their parents take place. MuSU presents programs that deal with issues such as being a minority on a predominantly white campus, survival techniques, and dealing with issues that the students, as well as the parents, may or may not have. The new freshmen class of African American students is invited to the campus early in the fall semester for a weekend retreat and activities.

Three days before the semester begins all students are invited to participate in a program called Great Beginnings. One topic discussed is diversity issues using a program called Reality 101 that deals with adversity and the importance of appreciating differences. That same discussion is included in the freshmen year experience seminar that continues orientation and introduction to campus. Follow up and support systems are in place for African American students including upper class mentors.

A series of seminars and workshops are available through the African American Student Services and Ethics Programs Office dealing with such things as study skills, adjustment, focus groups, and gender relations. Also, there are a series of lunches with organizational leaders to hear from the leadership as well as student members.

MuSU has a program to facilitate meetings among the city council members and student government representatives to discuss town/gown relationships.

Retention Alert is a program that includes all students. Faculty is asked to report how well students are doing in the classroom. The Office for Student Affairs follows up and makes sure students are aware of the support programs that are in place. Mid-term and end of semester grades are monitored. Students that are on academic warning or probation are made aware of the support programs.

Finally, as part of the orientation for new faculty, information is presented about where to seek assistance if problems arise.

Dr. Hughes, the interim president at Eastern Kentucky University, spoke to the committee. Since Dr. Hughes was serving as interim he drew on experiences as president of Northern Arizona University and Wichita State University in Kansas.

He noted that EKU has placed renewed emphasis on changing the environment for minority populations. The university is developing a strategic plan for recruitment and retention of African American students. Retention activities for African American students have been enhanced through programming conducted by the EKU Student Success Institute.

Eastern has incorporated multicultural student services in the provost's office to provide better coordination of recruitment and retention activities and to enhance service to students. The size and the role of the university diversity committee were expanded. Guidelines for the recruitment of new faculty members that include specific steps involving equal opportunity principles of best practice have been developed and implemented. Each department has been asked to develop specific recruitment plans for their disciplines.

Ms. Joanne Glasser, president-elect, Eastern Kentucky University addressed the committee.

President Glasser stated that Eastern Kentucky University shares the committee's view that higher education must develop whole communities of life-long learners, create knowledge, and deliver services that support the changing workforce and local communities. Eastern shares the committee's commitment to develop an educated citizenry that values life-long learning, providing equal opportunities for all Kentuckians, promoting state and local economic development, contributing to the commonwealth's global competitiveness, and enhancing the quality of life for all.

Eastern will be a campus that is centered on students. Students will be provided an educational opportunity as well as access to all graduate programs. The university takes very seriously its social and moral obligation to create an environment of diversity and inclusiveness to remove vestiges of the past and to establish a climate of acceptance and more importantly a climate of understanding.

Eastern will be proactive and aggressively reach out to African American students. There will be a renewed commitment to go out and aggressively recruit, retain, and graduate our African American students. Ms. Glasser committed to continue efforts to recruit and retain African American faculty, professional staff, and all staff members at the university, and to continue to make a good faith effort to support the partnership and show continued progress towards the eight goals outlined in the Kentucky Plan.

Mr. Cunningham asked if after the events of September 11, had any incidents occurred on the campuses involving hostility toward Muslims or middle Easterners.

Mr. Hughes, EKVU, replied there had been some limited activity related to middle easterners. The campus community reacted very positively but there was no specific input regarding any cases that were considered to be of great significance.

Mr. Alexander, MuSU, said that two Middle Eastern students left because their parents called them home.

Mr. Thomas raised a concern about changes made in the last months at Eastern Kentucky University and he offered the committee as a resource to Ms. Glasser.

Ms. Watts requested information from staff about the multiculturalism diversity curriculum (if there are any majors or minors in the field), and information and actions related to the incidents of September 11.

2002 CEO Meeting Dates. A motion was made and seconded to adopt that the CEO would meet in 2002 on February 11, April 15, June 10, August 19 (if needed), and October 21. All meetings, unless notified otherwise, would begin at 9 a.m. (ET) in Frankfort.

Improvements at Kentucky State University to Implement the Partnership Agreement with the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. A motion was made and seconded that the committee recommend to the Council on Postsecondary Education that a comprehensive assessment of the KSU academic programs be completed and that the results of that study advise the council on programmatic improvements at KSU.

Implementing the Commitments of the Partnership Agreement 2002 Campus Visits by the Office for Civil Rights and the Committee on Equal Opportunities. OCR indicated that by mid-December a schedule would be provided to the CEO. Committee members asked staff to see if that could happen sooner.

Implications of a Rigorous High School Curriculum. Ms. Helm commented on the Katie Haycock presentation (given by Janis Somerville) at the September Governor's Conference Postsecondary Education Conference that one comes away with some new revelation or better understanding of the need for there to be more connectivity between elementary/secondary and postsecondary system. There is a need for conversation because almost every institution of higher learning is now instituting developmental or remedial programs. That is a concern that needs continued monitoring.

Ms. Prather added that there needs to be more connectedness to a postsecondary level of rigorousness with high school curriculum. The committee needs to be advocates for that kind of thing.

Mr. Thomas agreed and noted that the data revealed much about the negative impact that it has on African American students. One concern is that the same language is not used to communicate the need for a rigorous curriculum across all lines. The P-16 Council is an excellent way to resolve this issue. Hopefully, the CEO can encourage the universities to insure that the composition of the P-16 Council is diverse, and also help the P-16 councils recognize the disconnect rather than to endorse a new curriculum that does not enhance educational benefits for the total population of Kentucky.

Ms. Taylor added that the Prichard Committee and other advocates could build strong connections in the community.

Other Business. The subcommittee chaired by Ms. Helm will make a report to the committee in February.

Mr. Jackson suggested that it is important for the CEO to be familiar with the individuals appointed by the presidents to represent their institutions on equal opportunity issues, the partnership agreement, and the Kentucky Plan. Eastern appointed Virginia Underwood as the new staff representative (replacing Sandra Moore). Kentucky State University appointed Betty Fritz-Cook (replacing Harold Greene). The University of Louisville appointed Dr. Mardene Taylor Archer (replacing Ralph Fitzpatrick).

Mr. Fitzpatrick introduced Ms. Archer who made several comments to the committee. Ms. Archer stated that UofL is working to build an inclusive campus climate. UofL is paying close attention to the Kentucky Plan and improving retention and graduation rates of students of color. Also, UofL is reviewing how students are prepared to live and work in a diverse and global society.

Mr. Jackson stated that Howard Bailey had been elected as the staff representative to the WKU board of regents and President Ransdell appointed C.J. Woods, Deborah Wilkins, and John Hardin as staff representatives.

Mr. C.J. Woods, director of minority student support services at Western, addressed the committee. Western has made some significant improvements in diversity on the campus. The diversity committee gave three awards for the President's Diversity Award for \$1,000 to a community member, staff person, and a faculty member at the institution. The diversity committee approved the student leadership multicultural conference that is going to target regionally, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The diversity committee also had a retaining budget of \$50,000 to work with for the upcoming year. One change in regards to enhancing faculty and staff diversity is bringing the group 'Synergy' to the campus for a two-day conference.

Mr. Fitzpatrick spoke as a member of the Kentucky Association for Blacks in Higher Education and offered its services to participate in future planning or in a consultation process.

Howard Bailey asked the committee to develop some means of receiving information from the KABHE during future planning sessions that the committee might conduct.

Mr. Barger instructed staff to work with the KABHE to establish a process to receive information from the KABHE in a timely manner and on a regular basis. Mr. Barger stated that, without objection by the members of CEO, a representative from KABHE could be involved in developing the next equal opportunities plan.

Ms. Helm raised the issue that the council would be requesting funds focused on teacher quality and that this fund may be open to the independent colleges and universities. She suggested that the CEO go on record advocating that if the independent and private institutions are allowed to participate in the trust funds they should also be subject to the provisions of the Kentucky Plan and be committed to equal opportunity and diversity.

It was moved and seconded to recommend to the council that if the private institutions are involved that they will follow the same guidelines and processes as the public institutions.

Cheryl Nunez, director of affirmative action and multicultural affairs at NKU, informed the committee that on October 23 the sixth circuit federal court of appeals in Cincinnati would hear a case on the University of Michigan affirmative action law school suit which will be determinative for our circuit in deciding whether affirmative action will be constitutional. Also on December 7, at NKU, Cornell West would address healing through justice. That program is co-sponsored by the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights.

The next meeting of the committee will be February 11, 9 a.m. at the council offices.

The meeting adjourned.

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